AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for forming a stepped profile from a layer sequence in which,

a) in a first patterning step, a first layer partial sequence is removed apart from a first residual layer partial sequence,

b) in a second patterning step, a second layer partial sequence located below the first layer partial sequence is partially removed by means of etching with a second etchant,

c) in a third patterning step, a third layer partial sequence located below the second layer partial sequence is partially removed by means of etching with a third etchant,

wherein:

d) in the second patterning step, a region of the second layer partial sequence that is located below the first residual layer partial sequence is removed, by which a first projection of the first residual layer partial sequence being formed, and

e) in the third patterning step, the first projection of the first residual layer partial sequence is removed.

2. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second and third patterning steps are effected in aqueous solution.

3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first patterning step is carried out by means of etching with a first etchant.

4. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 3, wherein a substantially identical chemical composition is chosen for the first etchant and for the third etchant.

5. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, in the first patterning step, the first layer partial sequence is removed to an extent such that a second projection of the protective layer arises, which second projection has a length t_1 greater than a thickness d_1 of the first layer partial sequence.

6. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first layer partial sequence substantially comprises Ag, the second layer partial sequence substantially comprises Ni, and the third layer partial sequence substantially comprises Ti.

7. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein an aqueous solution of nitric acid~~, preferably in a dilution ratio of 1:z where 2.0 < z < 8.0,~~ is used as the second etchant.

8. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim ~~1~~ 3, wherein a mixture of hydrogen peroxide, ammonium hydroxide and water~~, preferably in a volume ratio of approximately 1:x:y,~~ is used as the first and third etchants~~, where $0.5 < x < 2.0$ and $4.0 < y$ 10.0~~.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein, prior to the first patterning step, a protective layer is provided on the first layer partial sequence.

10. (New) The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the aqueous solution of nitric acid has a dilution ratio of 1:z where $2.0 < z < 8.0$.

11. (New) The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the mixture of hydrogen peroxide, ammonium hydroxide and water has a volume ratio of approximately 1:x:y, where $0.5 < x < 2.0$ and $4.0 < y < 10.0$.